



CAPTivations

Success Stories in Prevention

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Yu-Can Coalition - Yukon, OK

Students in Yukon, Oklahoma, are getting a taste of the legislative process, as well as spreading a drug and alcohol-free message, with the work they've done in the spring of 2003 to pass a Keg Identification bill.

"One of the students (on the coalition) asked if there was anything we could do about keg parties held in the country," said Casey Worthen, Yukon Public Schools' student assistant program coordinator. "We have 15 students on our coalition, and all our best ideas come from these students."

The Yu-Can Coalition was formed in May 2001 when members of the community applied for a State Incentive Cooperative Agreement (SICA).

This grant, nearly \$100,000 a year for three years, funds an educational program in the middle schools, as well as a number of substance free programs and activities.

Yukon is a town of 22,000, located west of Oklahoma City and serves as a bedroom community for the metropolitan area. About 90 percent of the population is Caucasian, and most people are considered either white collar or blue collar middle class. The town is heavily populated by people of Czech descent, and the people are proud of that heritage, Worthen said.

"This is a very religious, very conservative community," said Kent Mathers, assistant superintendent of Yukon Public Schools. "Parents here are very supportive of the school district. They are very involved."

The coalition is comprised of students, teachers, and administrators, as well as members of the community, representing private business, law enforcement, the judicial system, the fire department and clergy, Mathers said.

The main substances abused by the youth are tobacco and alcohol: "It's often kids being kids and thinking this is a rite of passage to adulthood to drink and smoke," Mathers said.

Marijuana also is used by some of the kids, but harder drugs like cocaine and heroin are not common in the community, Worthen and Mathers explained.

The impetus for the keg identification law came from students on the Yu-Can coalition asking what they could do about keg parties commonly held out in the country. These parties

usually happened when someone purchased a keg, then charged party-goers \$5 to \$10 a cup for unlimited refills.

From there, Worthen read a CAPTivations Success Story article about Drug Free Mesa County/Build A Generations efforts in Grand Junction, CO., to get a similar bill passed in Colorado. She talked to Ruth Michels, head of the Grand Junction coalition, and got some ideas from her about how to make the bill more appealing to the legislators.

"She told us to call it a Keg Identification bill, not a keg registration bill," Worthen said. "It's a friendlier term."

"And," she added, "(Michels) advised us to meet with lobbyists who work in the industry."

Oliver Delany, lobbyist for the malt liquor beverage industry, was helpful, advising the coalition to

write the bill so that the retailer is responsible for identification of the kegs. That's because a keg in Yukon today may be in Canada tomorrow.

Other groups began to get involved in the effort, including Larry Didier of the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services; Mike Tuma, director of the SICA grants; and officials from Lawton, Enid, Oklahoma City and Norman, all working to write a bill. The bill as written requires retailers to affix an identification seal to each keg sold, and when the keg is sold, the retailer must record the purchaser's name, address, and driver's license or ID number, as well as the date and time of the purchase. The retailer must also get the purchaser's signature. This way, if an underage party with a keg is "busted," the police can track the purchaser through the keg ID number and charge that person with providing alcohol to minors.

State Rep. Robert Worthen, Mrs. Worthen's husband, agreed to sponsor the bill in the state House of Representatives, and got 70 co-sponsors to sign on. The bill passed the House

*"...call it a Keg
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with a 99-0 vote, and went on to the Senate Finance Committee.

Students from the coalition have been actively involved in getting the bill passed. A group of high school students went to the Capitol when the bill was before a House committee, and both high school and middle school students witnessed the 99-0 vote on the House Floor. Over spring break, several middle school students went to the Capitol to successfully lobby the Senate Finance Committee to pass the bill.

The students made buttons that they wear and pass out to legislators. One says "It's time someone took responsibility. Vote Yes! House Bill 1014." The other reads, "For us, for our friends, for our future. House Bill 1014."

The bill passed the senate and made it to the governor's desk for his signature in May.

The students have been really impressed with the whole process of seeing a bill work its way through the Capitol. When the students went to observe the full House vote, they all dressed up, including one young man Worthen said she has never seen wear anything but jeans.

Beyond Keg Identification, the coalition took an idea from its students and produced a video encouraging kids not to try alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. The students suggested making a commercial that would run on the local cable station.

Tim Manning, a coalition member from Trinity Baptist Church, agreed to do the filming and the editing. The students wrote the script, sitting down one day and getting it together in an hour and a half, Worthen said.

The result is a minute-long piece showing students at school, at their lockers, in the cafeteria, and so on, with several students elaborating on the message, "It's all about the choices you make." The video also encourages those who are having problems with substance abuse or has a friend who is to talk to an adult. It turned out the video sound was not

compatible for television, however, the coalition was able to get the commercial showcased in local movie theaters as a trailer, Worthen said, adding that it probably gets more visibility there than it would have on the local cable stations.

In the schools, the Yu-Can coalition has put in place *Project Alert*, an evidence-based anti-substance use curriculum used in the middle schools. The school counselor goes into the sixth grade class room for one hour a week over 12 weeks to teach the course. Mathers said the project teaches students through interactive methods how to say no to drugs.

The students receive three booster programs as they progress to seventh and eighth grades.

"They are really positive about the program," Worthen said. "They love seeing the counselors. If they see them in the hall, they stop and talk with them."

The results of *Project Alert* are measured by pre- and post-testing. In the first evaluation after the 2001-2002 school year, the number of students (average age 12-1/2) who smoked rose from three to five percent, but Worthen said that what isn't measured is how many more kids might have started smoking without the program.

Both in the pre- and post-test, 84 percent of students said they do not plan on smoking in the next six months. When asked if smoking cigarettes every weekend might make a person addicted, the number of students who strongly agreed rose from 64 percent in the pre-test to 77 percent in the post-test. The percentage of kids who strongly disagreed with the statement that they would smoke at a party if they were bored and offered a cigarette also rose, from 67 percent to 89 percent.

For alcohol, the number of students who used in the last 30 days fell from 10 percent at the pre-test to 5 percent at the post test. The number of students who said they do not plan on drinking alcohol in the next six months also rose, from 67 percent to 74 percent. More students also believed after Project Alert that drinking every weekend might lead to addiction, from 63 percent to 72 percent. Sixty-five percent strongly agreed with the statement that kids will respect them more if they refused to drink, versus 57 percent at the pre-test.

When it comes to marijuana, after the course, 71 percent said kids would respect them more if they refused to smoke it, versus 61 percent at the pre-test.

"Students from the coalition have been actively involved in getting the bill passed."

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Center for Substance Abuse Prevention
www.samhsa.gov/centers/csap/csap.html

Decision Support System
www.preventiondss.org

Join Together
www.jointogether.org

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America
www.cadca.org

CSAP's Model Programs
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